37.

From Aboard the Van-herring.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM LEGORN,

To an Eminent Merchant in *Lond. Sept.* 23. 1680.

SIR,

MY laſt inform'd you what ill Circumſtances our Ship and Ships-company were in; this comes to tell you how matters now ſtand with us. And to ſpeak the truth, they are but little mended. The *Mahometans* aboard, and abroad, are ſtill plotting our deſtruction. Though at preſent they are pretty ſilent, yet they are not aſleep; we may expect a ſtorm after the calm. You wonder why this Ship is ſo much the object of their ſpight! for this you muſt underſtand, ſhe was once in their poſſeſſion, and 'twas the beſt Ship they had; they made great Merchandize of her; till anon a noble *Captain* that commanded her, was ſo affronted with their inſolence, and offended with their ſuperſtition, that he turn'd the moſt of them aſhore, and put Chriſtian Officers and Sailers in their room. And ever ſince the *Mahometans* have been reſtleſs in their attempts to ruin or recover her into their hands again. 'Tis within the memory of ſome yet alive, that they had a moſt deviliſh deſign upon her, and it had like to have taken effect. Some of them on board had very cunningly put Gunpowder under the place where the *Captain* and his Council of Officers were to meet, intending to have put fire to it, and to have blown them all up into the air: this treacherous Conſpiracy was diſcovered by the ſagacity of the *Captain* himſelf; and the ring-leaders being deſervedly executed, their heads were fixed for the terror of others upon the top of the Main-maſt. Not long before that, they rig'd out a Fleet, that they thought and call'd Invincible, and coming up to this Ship, they attackt her as ſhe lay at an anchor; but the heavens helping, ſhe worſted that great Armado, and ſome of the Ships being fired, others ſtranded, and the reſt ſcatter'd, ſcarce any return'd home to give an account of their ill ſucceſs. It was but the other day that they employ'd ſome to fire the great

Cabin of the Ship, which was effectually accompliſht. One *Algerine* confeſſed he had an hand in't, and was accordingly condemn'd and executed. Others were accuſed; but the *Lieutenant* got them out of the way. And after the then Council of Officers had a little lookt into the buſineſs, it was huſht up I know not how, and never enquired after ſince. However the *Mahometans* miſt of their aim, for in a little time the Cabbin was repaired again, and is now much more ſplendid than it was before. Since theſe diſappointments they have play'd at ſeveral ſmall games, being reſolved never to ſtand out; and now they think they have ſuch good Cards in their hands, if they can but get rid of the *Captain*, they make no queſtion of ſweeping the ſtakes. Therefore they have indented with ſeveral of late to take him off; but yet he hath eſcaped their malicious hands, and ſome of theſe (which is very ſtrange) have eſcaped the hands of Juſtice. My laſt told you of one, a little Doctor, or Chirurgeons-mate, and this will tell you of another, an old Cinkator, born in 88, or thereabout, he was try'd alſo for this bold attempt, and though the *Sailors* would have laid an hundred to one, when they heard the Evidence againſt him, he would be condemn'd, yet he was clear'd. Some others alſo have been unexpectedly acquitted upon their Trial; particularly two feinale Paſſengers, one a Tempeſtuous Lady, the other an Impudent Strumpet: This latter was ſo hardy, that ſhe afterward put forth a lying Libel in Vindication of the *Mahometans*, alledging that the Confeſſion upon record againſt them, was extorted by racks and tortures; a thing never practic'd aboard this Ship; for this ſhe was ſentenc'd to ſtand two or three times at the Capſtorm; and the boys fingers did itch to anoint her with Pitch and Tar; but the Clemency of the Officers would not ſuffer it. Theſe proceedings you may imagine don't a little animate the Conſpirators. And there is one little accident fallen out greatly to their content, after they had barbarouſly murder'd (as you heard before) an honeſt Boatſwain, the *Captain* put another in his room; a little ſprunt fellow, that did ferret them about; there could not be two or three of them together, but he was preſently at their heels; this ſawcineſs of his they deem'd inſufferable, therefore an hole was quickly pickt in his coat, and he ſent aſhore; ſo that now they can club and cabal together without controul; and if any ſhall moleſt them, they muſt look to themſelves. An honeſt *Quarter-maſter* a little while ago, did but a little diſguſt them, and preſently they appointed ſome deſperate Ruffians to diſpatch him; theſe taking their opportunity when he was all alone, fell upon him and cut his Throat; but being fear'd, they did their work to halves; for the *Quarter-maſter* by good looking after recovered, and is like to do well.

The *Captain*, though he doth not ſay much, yet doubtleſs he cannot but reſent theſe doings; and I believe alſo that he is ſomething concern'd about the growing Greatneſs and power of *Algier*; for he hath ſent to ſome other Ships to league with him for mutual ſecurity and defence: and upon this hangs a pretty ſtory, in the Arſenal of the Commonweaith of *Genoa*, (which is not far from us) there rides a Ship call'd the *Van-Trump*, a luſty ſtout Ship ſhe is, and fail'd altogether by *Chriſtians* and *Anti Mahometans*; this Ship alone hath born up againſt all the power of *Algier*. To this Ship the *Captain* ſent that there might be a nearer Alliance betwixt them; and when the Meſſenger came aboard, who ſhould he find there but an Envoy from *Algier*, who was negotiating the very ſame thing for his Maſter? And we are inform'd that he had

had cunningly inſinuated himſelf into ſome great Officers aboard the Ship, and had ſuggeſted to them the great glory and proweſs of his Maſter, as alſo the nakedneſs and great unfaithfulneſs of the *Van-herring*; and had them remember how unhandſomely ſhe had lately ſerv'd them in a Voyage from *Smyrna*. However the *Captain* and the Generality of the Officers were too wiſe to be wheedled into an Alliance with *Algier*; they were ſenſible 'twas againſt their intereſt that the *Van-herring* ſhould fall into the hands of the *Algerines*; for if ſo, all the favour they could expect, would be that which *Ulyſſes* obtain'd of *Poliphemus* to be laſt devour'd. And yet there is not ſo good an underſtanding and ſo firm an Union and Alliance betwixt theſe two Ships as moſt deſire, for certainly would they keep together, and reſolutely ſtand one by another, the *Algerines* would quickly pull in their horns; yea, theſe two Ships in conjunction are eaſily able to deſtroy the neſt of Pirates; they may keep them in, that they ſhall not peep out at Sea, yea, they may fall upon them aſhore. There is a multitude of Chriſtian ſlaves there, whoſe bondage is ſo grievous to them, that they would be glad of any opportunity to revolt. For my part I am not out of hope to ſee ſuch a deſign carried on for the good of all Chriſtendom. I know ſome of the principal Officers, and the generality of Sailors of both Ships deſire it ſhould be ſo. However it gives ſome ſatisfaction, that the *Captain* hath now at laſt declared, That his Council of Officers ſhall ſit, and conſult about common-ſafety. If you ask the reaſon why their coming together hath been ſo long defer'd, I know none but the *Captain* himſelf that can give you a poſitive anſwer; though others may ſtumble on this or the other probable conjecture. Some think the *Lieutenant* and others of the *Mahometan* faction are the cauſe. 'Tis manifeſtly their intereſt to hinder the Councils ſitting. 'Tis likely they'l begin where the former Council left, they'l fall a raveling into this *Helliſh and Damnable Plot*; and then the five great Criminals of which my laſt told you (who are ſtill kept in the Hold of the Ship) with many others will probably go to pot; yea, 'tis an even lay but they'l fall foul upon the *Lieutenant* himſelf, ſo did the Council that laſt met, who Voted that the Plotters took too great encouragement from the *Lieutenants* being a *Mahometan*, thereupon the Succeſſion might be thought diſputable.

I obſerve that a great many of the Sailors have a wonderful kindneſs for the *Captain*'s Eldeſt Son: He is now aboard, and when ever he appears upon the Deck, they flock about him, and ſhew him all imaginable reſpect. A day or two ago he went upon the foreſhip, and I warrant you there were Scores following him with ſuch loud Acclamations, as made the Ship to ring again; the *Lieutenant* heard it, and bit his lip; and though he ſaith nothing, I believe he thinks the more. It appears he is a little jealous of him; however the *Captain* hath been pleaſed to declare publickly, that he was never married to his Mother; but yet he did not ſay he was not his Father; he owns him ſtill for his Son; and the Sailors for his own and his Fathers honour are loth to think him Illegitimate.

Well, let the Father ſay what he will of his Son, upon my word he is a briſk young Gentleman, and by profeſſion a Chriſtian, and one that is renown'd for a perſon of admirable valour amongſt the *Mahometans* themſelves. Whether the Council will interpoſe and concern themſelves about this matter is uncertain; but ſome of the leſs wary Sailors have thought one reaſon why the Council have not ſat, to be a ſuſpition leſt they ſhould intermeddle with the Buſineſs of Succeſſion. Again,

Again, others think that ſome who are no *Mahometans* (at leaſt they are not ſuch profeſſedly) may be faulted; 'tis too well known, and it can't be conceal'd, how the Chriſtians themſelves that are in the Ship (the more is the pity) are not all of a mind. There are many that don't very well like the mode of Worſhip we have aboard; they ſay that ſeveral of our Religious uſages are borrowed from the *Mahometans*, this is the ſentiment of ſome of our Officers, and of a great, if not the greater number of the Sailors; this diſſent of theirs doth greatly enrage the other party, for this they ſtigmatize them, and ſometimes ſeverely handle them, which they may do by the Orders of the Ship. One would think our common danger ſhould induce us to uſe more moderation. And ſtanders-by that are not ſo deeply concern'd and engag'd in a party, do think the petty differences amongſt us are capable of an accommodation, and the rather becauſe both ſides agree in the main. Only there are a few half-witted and hare-brain'd bigots that blow up the coals. Nay, there are ſome that are not aſham'd to declare, they would rather be *Mahometans* than Chriſtian diſſenters; which it may be is truly enough ſpoken for that they are *Semi-Mahometans* already; they are theſe mungril-Chriſtians that do us the greateſt miſchief; if we ever be deſtroy'd, 'twill be by the wild-fire of theſe men. Theſe be they that diſſwade the *Captain* from calling his Council together; fearing poſſibly leſt they ſhould make ſome alteration in the preſent Orders of the Ship in favour of the diſſenting party; which they may be the more inclin'd to do, for as much as they find them to be very faithful to the intereſt of Chriſtianity, and moſt forward (upon all occaſions) for the Ships welfare and ſafety. They ſee alſo that the ſeverities they have for ſometime been under, have not had their intended effect, in as much as they are increas'd and not diminiſht thereby. Some of theſe Phreneticks (for ſo they may be call'd) are often buzzing the *Captain* in the ear with the rude carriage of a Council of Officers in his Fathers days. It happen'd, as you have probably heard, that his Father had a conteſt with his Council, and from words they fell to blows, and in the ſcuffle the good old *Captain* was kill'd and thrown overboard; this unhappy and unheard of Tragedy, is ever now and then ript up to alienate the preſent *Captain* from his Council; though we all know the now Council hath not the ſame power, nor doth it conſiſt of the ſame perſons. I believe they are a company of as honeſt men as ever uſed the Sea; and on my conſcience they have that reſpect and honour for the *Captain*, that they would hazzard their All for his ſafety and preſervation. And if he would but be adviſed by them, he might be as happy a man as ever commanded a Ship. If in his Conduct he ſhould have been any ways tardy or deficient, they would take no notice of it. For 'tis a Maxim amongſt them, That though his Officers may, yet the *Captain* himſelf can't do amiſs.

SIR,

Yours to ſerve You, &c.

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